

H.R. 3673—SECOND EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS ARISING FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF HURRICANE KATRINA, 2005

HON. ADAM SMITH

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my disappointment for the Federal government's delayed response to Hurricane Katrina. I am extremely concerned about the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director Michael Brown and call for his resignation.

Brown and his senior leadership team have demonstrated a stunning level of ineptitude that made the disaster of Katrina and the loss of life and property much worse than it had to be. This tragic event has made clear that the FEMA team is not up to the job of protecting Americans from either natural disasters or from any possible terrorist attack. Security is a paramount concern to me and Americans deserve a competent and able emergency management agency. Now that it is proven that this team is incapable, we can't afford to wait to replace Director Brown.

I also strongly disagree with the suggestion—made by many in the Administration and the majority—that Americans shouldn't "point fingers" or play the "blame game" as the relief effort continues. Thousands of lives are at stake right now. We are also spending billions of public dollars on the recovery and those resources must be spent effectively and efficiently. We need an experienced team now to implement the government's plan for repairing the southeast region, not after a lengthy review process. While I support that broader review, one thing is immediately clear: The director of FEMA is plainly not up to the important job at hand.

Consider the following critically important facts.

Despite days of warning, FEMA did virtually nothing to prepare for the impact of Katrina. Director Brown reportedly waited 5 hours after Katrina struck before he proposed to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff that he send 1,000 Homeland Security workers into the region to support rescuers. Even then, his letter gave personnel 2 full days to arrive on the scene to begin offering assistance. It was 5 agonizing days before FEMA and DHS showed up in any significant numbers with adequate supplies to help the tens of thousands of people in New Orleans.

Equally disturbing are the efforts of FEMA and others in the Administration to explain away these inexcusable actions. Claims have been made that local leaders in Louisiana did not ask for help and that the Federal government could not have foreseen that the levees around New Orleans would be breached in the event of a significant hurricane.

The utter absurdity of these claims makes it even clearer that we need new leadership at FEMA if Americans are to have any confidence that the agency will wisely and effectively deal with the continuing crisis in the Gulf Coast, much less prepare for future natural disasters or terrorist attacks.

First, locals did ask for help before the storm hit and FEMA assumed responsibility for dealing with the fallout from Katrina. Louisiana's Governor Kathleen Blanco declared a State of emergency for Louisiana on August 26th and on August 27th, she requested Federal support. On that same day, and acting on your authorization, Director Brown responded to Blanco's request for assistance and declared that FEMA would "mobilize equipment and resources necessary to protect public health and safety by assisting law enforcement with evacuations, establishing shelters, supporting emergency medical needs, meeting immediate lifesaving and life-sustaining human needs and protecting property, in addition to other emergency protective measures."

Second, the coming disaster was clear. Max Mayfield, the Director of the National Hurricane Center has confirmed that both Director Brown and Secretary Chertoff listened to his agency's briefing on Katrina's likely impact. Mayfield made repeated warnings about the hurricane and was quoted by the New Orleans Times-Picayune as saying, "We were briefing them (FEMA and DHS) way before landfall. It's not like this was a surprise. We had in the advisories that the levee could be topped." It is alarming that, given this knowledge, FEMA thought it was appropriate to sit back and wait instead of aggressively preparing for the disaster.

Third, the vulnerability of the levees was well established. Last year, FEMA conducted a simulation involving the potential evacuation of New Orleans as a result of a Hurricane. For my years experts had been predicting that the levees could be breached by a hurricane and that the results would be disastrous, costing thousands of lives and billions of dollars. In 2001, the Army Corps of Engineers conducted a study and found that the levees in the region needed to be updated, raised, and the pumping systems modernized. In the event of a category 4 or 5 hurricane, like Hurricane Katrina, the levees would fail and the cities within the levees would be at risk of flooding.

Perhaps most troubling, Federal officials knew from news reports and from Mayor Ray Nagin's comments that tens of thousands of New Orleans residents would not be able to respond to the call to evacuate. Despite this understanding, no action was taken to accommodate those who could not evacuate their city.

I am deeply troubled by what this failure of leadership could portend for another disaster or attack. Some of FEMA's top positions have been staffed with individuals who have ample political and campaign experience, but virtually no understanding of how to prepare for and respond to a disaster of any magnitude. We expect State and local responders to be well trained and qualified. The same must be true of FEMA's leaders. There is no doubt that a new and better skilled leadership team at FEMA is required in order to best protect our Nation.

The tragic events caused by Hurricane Katrina have left hundreds of thousands of Americans with shattered homes and families and without food and water. I am committed to joining together to provide relief and to save as many lives as possible.

I have seen the compassion of Americans as volunteers, donations and financial assistance has flowed into the southeast region. We must now do our part to repair the damaged

region and assist in rebuilding the lives of many of our citizens. I look forward to working with the Administration and my colleagues in Congress to help the people in this devastated region.

IN HONOR OF UNITED STATES
CONGRESSMAN BARNEY FRANK

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in tribute and recognition of Congressman BARNEY FRANK, as he is honored by the Cleveland Stonewall Democrats for his significant service on behalf of the citizens of the 4th Congressional District of Massachusetts.

Since being elected to the United States Congress in 1981, Congressman FRANK has blazed a courageous road fortified by civil rights and human rights for every American, regardless of their differences. His candor, compassion and convictions have consistently given a voice to the oppressed and vulnerable of our society and his work continues to raise the level of grace and dignity for all Americans by casting the pall of ignorance and discrimination into the light of truth and justice.

A highly regarded and respected attorney, activist and public servant, Congressman FRANK's constituency in Massachusetts has demonstrated their overwhelming faith and admiration for him by voting him back in office twelve times. He is the Senior Democrat on the Financial Services Committee and has worked tirelessly on behalf of vital issues that affect the well being of our society, including gay rights, health care, education, preservation of the arts and the steadfast protection of our civil liberties.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, please join me in honor and recognition of my friend and colleague, Congressman BARNEY FRANK, for his immeasurable service and courageous leadership on behalf of the citizens of our country. Congressman FRANK's steadfast advocacy and unwavering focus on human rights is framed by excellence, heart, integrity and personal wisdom. Congressman FRANK continues to raise our society into the light of tolerance and truth, thereby elevating the lives of countless Americans into the realm of hope for a better tomorrow, and peace and justice for all, in the 4th District of Massachusetts and across our Nation.

CELEBRATING JOHN D. LEE

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, on September 15, John D. Lee, the President of the Boys & Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley, will be honored for 35 years of service. He is only the second President in the organization's 60-year history.

John went to work for the Boys & Girls Club of the Tennessee Valley as a Facility Director on September 16, 1970. He was later promoted to Assistant Executive Director and then to President and CEO.